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14 October 1962

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence**

**SUBJECT: Factors Involved in CIA vs SAC Control,  
Command, and Support of Cuban U-2  
Reconnaissance**

1. This paper is in response to a requirement of the DCI for an analysis of the factors involved in consideration of the possible designation of SAC as executive agent for the further conduct of Cuban U-2 reconnaissance flights. In addition, it contains, at Attachment A, a brief history of Project IDEALIST's involvement with the J-75 version of the U-2 and the reasons why USAF did not adopt this model. While principally for information, the paper does contain a staff recommendation for the Director in Paragraph 3.

2. It seems to us counter-productive to argue from the start that SAC could not conduct U-2 reconnaissance of the Island of Cuba, using either their own J-57 U-2s or those IDEALIST J-75 U-2s which could be made available to them were this course of action decided upon. Yet, before a decision is made to transfer Project IDEALIST U-2s to SAC control for future flights simply because a SAC pilot may be more desirable in the present political climate and Air Force markings are placed on the aircraft, we believe due consideration should be given to the following factors, not necessarily set forth in the order of their importance:

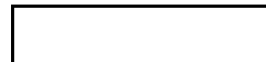
a. CIA Employment of Special Project Concept: Since its inception, the Agency has managed and operated the U-2 program as a self-contained project, with the attention of a small group of people in headquarters and the field directed toward its success and concerned over its problems and its security. This task force has had within its structure the

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capability to not only run its own affairs, but to provide its own separate, speedy communications, its own professional security force, a separate operations planning staff and a closely related staff materiel organization. It has called for Air Force support in terms of personnel, materiel and air-lift from a single coordinated point. This project has not only had its own intelligence staff, dealing with other Agencies as their support was required for a mission, but it has been physically proximate to the COMOR, from which mission requirements were received on a community-wide basis. This unified group of people, all working within the same Agency and under the same security system, has had seven years of experience with the U-2, during which time some 327 overflights of denied territory have been successfully conducted, not including some 41 peripheral flights. In Cuba alone, 51 overflights have been conducted periodically since 1960. Research and Development designed to improve the aircraft performance has been carried on continuously and expeditiously within this same Project framework. Even in an organization like SAC, separate from the balance of the Air Force, this kind of unified management, operations and support is very difficult to duplicate, and transferring this concept to SAC from CIA in workable form would require considerable time, planning and experience.

b. CIA Employment of Contractor Maintenance: Again from the start, this Agency has employed a system of contractor-furnished maintenance personnel for the U-2 airframe and engine as well as for the majority of the other aircraft intelligence collection systems. This has ensured the highest degree of reliability throughout the life of the aircraft, although this record has not been achieved inexpensively. Aircrew personnel furnished by Lockheed have averaged more than 15 years of experience and many of them now have more than seven years working continuously with the U-2. The military system, fraught with continuous rotation, is simply incapable of equalling this kind of experience level, and it is this that pays off in the final analysis in terms of missions successfully run without incident or accident.



c. Special Security Clearances and Containment of Mission Information: Another major factor working for program integrity is the fact that Project IDEALIST has been operated since its start under a separate security clearance system and has had available to it an integrated force of professionally trained security officers with a high degree of mission orientation, serving the project full-time both in headquarters and the field. The single security system concept extends into industrial areas as well. One of its major benefits is that it has been continuously possible to ensure the maximum amount of containment for mission objectives by making certain that the "need-t-know" principle was uniformly applied among the smallest number of people possible. We submit that such a system does not today exist within the Air Force, where security policy is often the prerogative of local commanders.

d. Communications and Communications Security: The Project IDEALIST Communications Staff operates not only administrative communications but is responsible for operations communications as well. In contrast to the Air Force system, all Project traffic is by direct circuit transmission and all of it is enciphered to the highest standards. The Communications Staff is composed exclusively of professional personnel, trained to the uniform Agency standard of maximum proficiency, security and speed. The only cryptographic violations we have experienced in the past year, for example, have been on those circuits manned by USAF personnel. This staff has also furnished specialized communications and ELINT service to Project IDEALIST, in the form of engineering and maintenance assistance. On ELINT systems, they work closely with the analysts so that technical maintenance enjoys a real-time relationship to the collection equipment. This is an important asset not available in package form to the Air Force. As an example of its speed, and even allowing for SAC unfamiliarity with communications from Omaha to Edwards AFB, on the initial SAC-executed mission of 14 October, the "Go-No-Go" weather forecast took SAC a total of 14 hours, 22 minutes to transmit through relay points from Omaha to EAFB, in contrast to a re-transmission time of one hour, 13 minutes from Washington to EAFB on CIA's system.

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utilized in this instance as a backup capability. By the time the SAC forecast arrived at Edwards, the mission had been on the ground at McCoy AFB for 42 minutes, and the weather was no longer within the valid period for which it had been requested.

e. Mission Security: Mission security, both in headquarters and the field, has long been traditional with Project IDEALIST. Employment with headquarters or a field detachment has never entitled anyone to mission information, pertaining either to targets, routes or times. When support is required from other Agencies, i.e., NSA, NORAD, JRC, etc., the most that is given out in advance of the mission is the general area and valid times for Coast-In and Coast-Out Points. Only after a mission has departed is flight line information given to just those Agencies required to have it in performance of their support mission. Within Air Force we have seen that this is not the way in which they operate; routes are posted in Command Situation Rooms well in advance of mission times, and access to these rooms is too often on the basis of rank and position rather than "need-to-know." Clearance status of personnel viewing flight routes is often impossible to determine, especially in advance. Careful adherence to this form of mission security has been a vital ingredient in reducing political as well as operational risk.

f. Relocation of Targeting and Requirements Responsibility: Under the IDEALIST system, targeting and requirements responsibility has been contained within a single unit located in Washington where the political decisions necessary to implement missions are made. As missions are run, follow-on missions can quickly be planned on the basis of film readout, also accomplished nearby. COMOR evaluations can be transmitted to Operations across the hall. If SAC receives mission responsibility, not only with this close physical relationship be broken, but missions will be launched from Omaha rather than from within the shadow of the Special Group (5412). We have always had the capability to postpone a mission up to takeoff time, based upon late-breaking political developments. Under

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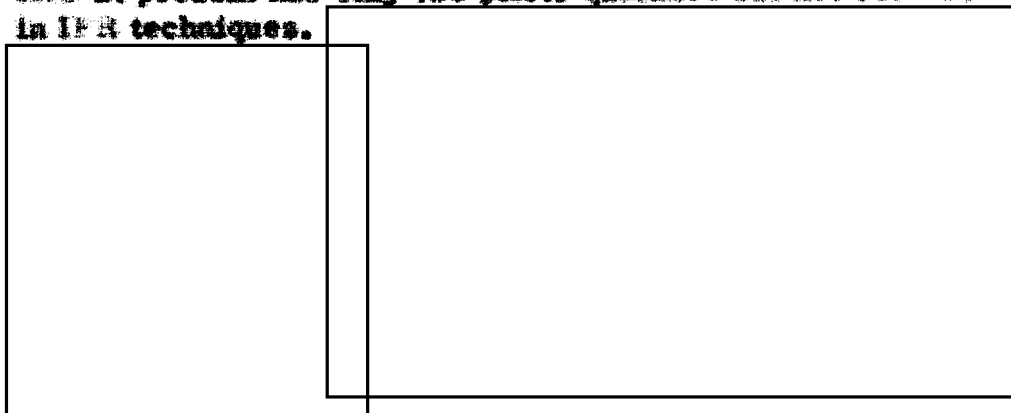


SAC operations, this capability will be materially reduced. In addition, SAC is not experienced in the "headquarters-directed mission" concept in operation of the U-2, since their mission launching responsibility has always been delegated down to the Wing level from SAC Headquarters.

a. Pilot Experience Levels: The Agency U-2 pilot group average at least six years flying the U-2. The majority of their flight time has been spent in the J-75 model since its introduction in 1958. At present, SAC has exactly one pilot checked out and current in the J-75, with three others available who have flown the aircraft within periods running from six to 15 months ago. Retraining would be required for these latter pilots, and in view of the present shortage of mission aircraft, an hour flown today in training mission is an hour subtracted from mission availability. CIA's pilot group is all-weather qualified in the J-75 model and they are all checked out and current in in-flight refueling techniques. SAC at present has only two pilots qualified but not current in IFR techniques.

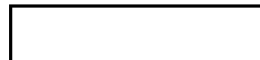
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3. It would seem that the basic questions at issue here are the following:

a. As a National Policy, should covertly executed over-head reconnaissance of denied areas be performed by the Defense Establishment, or, because of the plausible denial aspect, by the Central Intelligence Agency with LOD support?



b. If the question above can be answered, then how should covertly executed overhead reconnaissance be managed? Should it be by the compartmented "special project" method with an isolated, integrated capability and control system or by its normal assignment to a major Department with a subsequent breakout of cutions through the Department staff?

Since the President has not yet decided to overtly acknowledge overhead reconnaissance of Cuba with military assets, but has limited his official position to a reported willingness to acknowledge peripheral reconnaissance of the island by the military, and then only in the event of an incident, it would appear to us that grounds still exist to consider these missions as covert enterprises, deserving of professional execution by that staff most experienced in conduction operations within the smallest circle of knowledgeable people. On that basis, it is our recommendation that the DCI continue to support execution of Cuban U-2 reconnaissance under the command control and guidance of this Agency.

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JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM JR.  
DAD/CSA

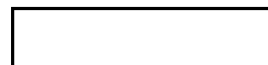
**Attachments**

- A - J-75 Employment
- B - Operations Plan

**TOP SECRET**

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**DAD/OSA/JACunningham:mh (14 Oct 62)**

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